

## **MAYOR MARK W. MYERS**

### **2023 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

Welcome.

First off, thank you for being here.

Isn't this a remarkable place? You are having lunch on a soccer field! This may be a first for a State of the City in Johnson County.

We chose the Greenwood Fieldhouse to host this year's State of the City, as it symbolizes everything that makes our city great: Pride in our history and our dedication to Progress. Thank you to all who made today possible, from the Aspire team, our food service crew and the Greenwood Fieldhouse team.

In Greenwood, we do what it takes, and we are not afraid to innovate. Years ago (maybe a few more than I am willing to admit), I went to school here. With a lot of work and a smart team, we have preserved our past and created a state-of-the-art community asset for all ages. I hope you all will take time after lunch to tour the facility...maybe play some pickleball, shoot some hoops or play a little golf in the golf simulators.

Before I get started, I want to impress upon you that we have a strong team serving this community. I am not just saying that because we are in an athletic facility. I would like all of our common councilors and city team to stand. Thank you for all you do!

And I want to extend a personal thank you to my wife Stacie who is here today and my kids, many of whom are joining in online, and also my mother and two of my sisters. They are the reason I have pursued this passion for public service. Making the world a better place is what I care about, and my family is my inspiration.

A friend told me about the recent death of her daughter's soccer coach. She mentioned his eulogy. When talking about how this coach lived his life, his tenacity and persistence, it was asked...what is the opposite of winning?

My friend then posed the question to me - what IS the opposite of winning? Naturally, I thought...well, losing. Losing is the opposite of winning.

I was wrong. As this coach was remembered in his eulogy, the answer to that question was revealed. The opposite of winning is not losing, it is QUITTING. Think about that - winning and losing - they are part of the journey. Quitting is defeat.

So many times, when parenting, when leading, when governing, we don't always win. We have some "misses" and some dark days. But one thing I believe in is that we stay in the game - just like the thousands of people who will compete and train and learn in this beautiful fieldhouse. That is how I have approached my job as mayor. We always keep finding ways to do better and be better. We don't quit!

There are times in the last few years we all would have wanted to quit. COVID gave us many opportunities. Last July we had another...

I grew up and was raised here. I have been here on the city's brightest days and on some of its darkest. I would be remiss if I did not pause for a moment to talk about one of our darker days.

The shooting at the Greenwood Park Mall - July 17 was a day that will be impossible for many of us to forget. We grieve for the lives lost that night. We pray for those who still struggle with memories from the tragedy. It was unexpected and uncharacteristic for our community. Our first responders along with a brave young man who happened to be at the mall prevented that tragedy from being worse. There are no words to describe my gratitude.

In the aftermath, we saw our community come together. I am so proud of our city for its response to that tragedy. I will never forget the prayer vigil for healing that was held days after the shooting. People from all walks of life joined together in remembrance and peace. That is what Greenwood stands for. As I said that evening...that night will not define Greenwood. It will not define our community or our future. I will not allow that to happen. We. Don't. Quit!

For those who have been to my last 11 State of the City talks, you know I reference my four pillars - Public Safety, Infrastructure, Economic Development and Quality of Life.

Public safety has and continues to be my top priority. I have no greater job than to ensure those who live in and visit our community are safe. This is no small job. I have been involved in public safety almost my entire life. As a young man, I worked in my parents' ambulance business and saw very early in life both the pain and suffering of victims and the compassion and professionalism of first responders. Public safety service has in many ways defined my life. I have served as a firefighter, a police officer and a detective. I was elected to serve as Johnson County Coroner and have been lucky enough to serve as director of security for the U.S. Embassy in Paraguay and on the board of the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy.

Public safety strategy touches almost every part of the government. It starts by ensuring our first responders are well-staffed, well-paid, well-equipped and well-trained. We have been able to increase our fire budget by 25 percent this year and the police budget by 19 percent. My team has consistently improved public funding while maintaining a balanced budget. My first budget was 2013. That year police funding was \$6.8 million. In the past 10 years, it has increased by 40% to over \$11.1 million in 2023. In 2013, our fire budget was \$4.9 million. In 2023, it has increased by 122% to \$10.9 million.

Let's look at staffing. When I came to office in 2012, we had 33 full-time firefighters and 53 full-time police officers. For a city of almost 54 thousand, we managed. In the last ten years, our city has grown by 24%. Today I am happy to report, that this year we have funded 68 full-time firefighters - six new ones this year and 77 full-time police officers - three additional officers this year. Our staffing growth has far outpaced our growth in population.

We have seen a challenge in recent years in recruiting police officers and fire department personnel. Our team has been intentional about looking at compensation. This year, thanks to the cooperation with our Common Council, base salaries for our public safety heroes are over \$70 thousand. With health insurance and the city's contribution to pensions, the total compensation is over \$102 thousand. This is helping us attract the best of the best.

One more thing I want to call out as we strengthen our teams, this year we are adding a civilian position to the police department. The Watch Commander will be handling all the call-in reports and reports filed over the computer. By doing this, we free up a sworn officer to get back on the streets.

We also budget to ensure our first responders have the necessary tools to do their jobs. We updated the Police Training Center, renovated and opened the Tactical Athlete Clinic, and began the design of the new Station 95. Some of our 'tools' come in the form of training. One thing I am particularly proud of is that in 2022 ALL Greenwood Police officers received 40 hours of training and became CIT certified. CIT stands for Crisis Intervention Team. What this means is that our officers are better equipped to handle mental health crises. As we know, this is an epidemic in our country. I am proud of the leadership our department is taking in this area.

Our public safety efforts are also enhanced by the creativity of several of our departments. Our finance team was able to use over \$1 million of CARES Act money to award grants to our local public school systems to improve security technology. Our Community Development Services team updated the crosswalks and signals at 14 of our public schools and we have begun a partnership with Simon Malls in which we will install a bi-directional amplifier at the Greenwood Park Mall to improve the reliability of our radio system in the mall.

The job of protecting our community will never end. We have new challenges today that we didn't have when I was young. But in Greenwood we innovate, we collaborate, and...we don't quit.

In 2022 we continued to move the ball on investing in our infrastructure. Some of these achievements may not sound exciting. But when you look at where we were and where we are going, they are critical to our future. Our ability to move around the community efficiently and safely, have storm and sanitary sewer systems that can accommodate our population and the mechanisms to handle what Mother Nature sends is important to economic development and overall quality of life.

Let's look at some of our big projects...east to west connectivity is and has been a huge focus. We are getting closer to having four lanes east to west in Greenwood. We have \$67 million of planned road improvements in the pipeline. This is important to the safety and viability of our city.

As part of the Worthsville Road project, we reconstructed 1,600 feet of roadway for the Stones Crossing Road and Honey Creek Road roundabout. The second to last section of the Worthsville Road Corridor project continues strong. This multigenerational project seeks to improve east/west connectivity across the city and section two is on schedule to be completed this summer.

In 2023, we will design the Smith Valley Road and Averitt Road Roundabout with funding secured through the Metropolitan Planning Organization. This intersection was identified as a high crash location.

And I want to applaud our team for aggressively seeking state and federal funds to offset these investments. One thing I have learned while being mayor is that one of the best ways to grow and maintain our assets is to always have plans and projects ready so Greenwood can benefit from state and federal grants. By being on our toes and proactive, we continue to bring taxpayer money back home to Greenwood. In December, we were awarded another \$1M in Community Crossing Road improvement grants. By having shovel-ready projects teed up and a strong balance sheet to provide matching funds - The City of Greenwood has now been awarded \$5.6M in Community Crossing funds since 2016.

In 2022, Greenwood's Street Department poured more than 31 hundred feet of sidewalk. It also swept almost 450 miles of streets... 4 times. They work hard all year long to deliver.

I also want to report that last year we completed the Western Regional Interceptor project. It is one of those critical infrastructure projects that, while not visible, is needed to support our families and businesses. And additional kudos to our Stormwater team and their work on the Honey Creek Bridge project. Replacing an aging culvert with a bridge to stop the flooding and overflowing of water during heavy rains.

I realize we are among the fastest-growing communities in Indiana. We saw a record number of permits issued last year. These commercial and residential projects are valued at almost \$284 million of new investments in our city. I assure you that we have solutions and tools to manage the challenges growth might bring. Some of these take years to implement but I want you to know that we have a great team that talks and most importantly listens to our citizens and businesses and is constantly adjusting and updating our plans.

One monumental project we are kicking off today is Greenwood's new Comprehensive Plan. The current plan was last updated in 2007. It is time! This will be our all-encompassing "blueprint for the future." It outlines our vision for the future and provides the vision, goals and principles to achieve success. I want to be clear. This is not my team and me developing this. We will NEED your input. You will hear a lot about this in the coming months. I strongly encourage you to participate in this process. We want YOUR ideas for YOUR community.

Early in my administration, my team adopted a strategy that added quality of life improvements to the economic incentives on which we relied in the past. We are enjoying lunch in one of these projects. Others include Freedom Springs, the Community Center, Old City Park and the development of the Greenwood Sports Park. Our infrastructure improvements make our community more desirable to both businesses and new families.

We are seeing the impact. Don't get me wrong. We are in constant competition with communities across Indiana AND the nation. We win some and we lose some. But we are always competitive, and we don't quit.

Our focus on quality of life has attracted great businesses. Endress+Hauser recently announced its plan to build a \$30 million Innovation Center adjacent to its current facility on Worthsville Road. The Endress leadership cited our commitment to quality of life as a key factor in the decision to grow in Greenwood rather than in other states in which they had facilities. The new facility will be the first of its size in North America which is both net zero energy and net zero carbon. The new facility will also be home to George E. Booth. The 2 companies expect to produce 95 new jobs at average salaries of over \$80,000 per year.

I want to commend Endress+Hauser for dedicating 3,000 square feet in the facility to a new Design and Innovation Studio. The facility will provide K-8 educators with a venue for field trips and extracurricular enrichment around STEM education. I would like any of the Endress+Hauser team to stand up. Thank you for being an important part of our community now and in the future.

That is a huge win for Greenwood. But in the last year, we have seen many wins. I want to point out a few that mean a lot to me. Our city thrives on its diversity of business. We have huge companies, and we have small businesses. One Greenwood company that has a great story and is seeing its hard work payoff is PLS. This elite conveyor and equipment installation company is growing, investing \$5 million and adding 35 new high-paying jobs here in

Greenwood. I would like the leaders of PLS to stand. Also, VisionQuest, an optometry practice, has decided to add more jobs and a new facility. Dr. Browning, please stand. And, Ermco will be officially opening its facility in the coming months. Exciting times in Greenwood.

Time and again we are seeing companies not only locate but grow here. When I meet with site selectors and business leaders, they look at so many factors - sites, access, education, workforce, housing, quality of place. All those factors are so very important.

Today we are in the middle of one of our cornerstone projects that is adding to our quality of place. The development of our Old Town is ongoing and is a catalyst for attracting businesses and families. Construction sometimes brings its challenges, but we are seeing it reap rewards.

I want to commend our small businesses who are living through and finding success during this construction. Businesses like Hoosier Brewing, Board and Brush, Smocktown Brewery, Vino Villa and the new Fresh Pots Coffee Bar are giving unique reasons for visitors and residents to come downtown. It will only get better. Thank you to those business owners!

All around the fieldhouse, we see construction and investment. Right now, more than \$68 million in private investment is pledged in downtown Greenwood because of our commitment to redevelop what was a decaying downtown. As a lifelong Greenwood resident, I have seen the evolution of our downtown. That is why I have particular pride in the developments here. Our partners expect to complete the Madison this year and I am excited to welcome new residents and businesses to Old Town.

All across the city, we are growing and improving. Today, I want to announce a new project. I have approved a Main Street Corridor Study to propose improvements to our "front door." Each day 24,000 cars travel on Main Street from Five Points to Valle Vista. We need to put our best foot forward and make this corridor both visually appealing and safe. I have commissioned a study to see what this COULD be. I look forward to sharing this with you later this year.

Think about this...since becoming mayor in 2012 more than 5,000 jobs have been added in Greenwood. That is remarkable. This success has attracted even more potential employers and has allowed us to be much more selective in the projects we bring to Greenwood. We want high-wage growth and community-minded companies.

Just like public safety, economic development is a team effort. Every department in the city is part of our effort to attract new and innovative businesses. And I want to be sure we thank our schools for helping in that effort. Education is a key component of our "city sales pitch."

We also have an amenity that many communities envy. The Indy South Greenwood Airport is a hidden gem. I am so proud of our team there. They work hard and the facility was named Indiana's 2022 Airport of the Year. Little known facts...our airport sees more than 28-thousand aircrafts a year and has a \$15 million economic impact for Greenwood. Thank you to the airport manager, Rick Ferrill, and the airport team!

One of our teams whose work is essential across the city impacting the quality and CULTURE of our community is the Parks and Recreation Department. They are busy!

Let's look at the stats....

Consider this, last year the Parks team hosted 32 events with almost 80-thousand attendees... 13-hundred kids were served in before and after school programs.... 45 hundred participated in youth and adult fitness programs... Freedom Springs saw 107,000 visitors this season...the Fieldhouse has sold more than 12-thousand day passes in 6 months- this doesn't include program participants ...the Community Center welcomes almost 116-thousand visits.... when we consider the amount of engagement - meaning touch points with our community - our Parks team accommodated more than 240-thousand experiences!!!

We are a city of roughly 65 thousand people. To say we have an engaged community is an understatement. I cannot say enough about the outstanding work of our team! When we look at tenacity, our Parks team does not quit!!! Rob, Jen, and all on the Parks team, please stand. Thank you for all your do.

Oh yeah, there is more to come on the Parks side. We broke ground on the Greenwood Sports Park next to the new Ray Crowe elementary school. It will have four baseball and four softball diamonds, a multi-use soccer field with a cricket pitch, a state-of-the-art playground, a splash pad and a multi-use trail. We hope to open it in the fall of 2024.

We are continually adding to our trail system, enhancing our parks and growing our programming. Our community wants options, and we continue to meet the demands of an active and engaged community.

When we talk about engagement, I want to mention our growing MyGreenwood program. Last year we developed an App that helps citizens communicate with the city. See a pothole? You can input it here. Want to know about events? Pull it up. Want to pay a city bill? Do it here...the program helps us be more responsive to our community. The QR code and directions are on your table. As the second phase of the program, we kicked off the MyGreenwood HOA program. We met with about 50 leaders from homeowners' associations across the city. The purpose of this group is to pass along information and to help educate these volunteer leaders on questions they might have in their neighborhoods. I really enjoy their interest and the continuation of this program.

Phew...there is so much going on across the city. This is exciting to me. I am from Greenwood and for Greenwood. That is why I love this job and why I work every day to improve the quality of life here. That is at the center of what we do.

We can do all these things because we are focused and smart about how and where we invest money. The last few years have certainly challenged us. But we rose to that challenge and did not quit!

With inflation, crazy supply chain issues and fuel prices, I encouraged my team to innovate when it came to spending. We had to look long and hard at our budgets and ensure we were making smart investments while maintaining the quality services our community expects. AND thanks to our staff, I have presented 11 balanced budgets to the Common Council, and ALL have been approved. Our focus on conservative but smart investment is highlighted by the fact that Greenwood still has the lowest PROPERTY tax rate of any city over 10 thousand people in the state!

When you consider we have seen remarkable growth and invested significantly in public safety and parks, that is no small task. We are proud to announce for the last nine years year in a row

the City of Greenwood was awarded the Excellence in Financial Reporting Award. The unsung heroes that make up my finance team are Greg, Jared, Kevin. Please stand up.

I have never felt so confident in the direction our city was going as I do today. We continue to maintain our strong financial health while investing in our people and progress. We have a team that is committed to our city and is always looking at new and better ways to improve our quality of life. As I mentioned before, I was born in this city, I went to school right here where we are sitting and I believe more than ever that this city can overcome any challenge. Our citizens and our city are strong and we will never quit.

It's year 12. Let's get to work.

Thank you.